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EDITORIAL NOTES

The Michigan College of Mines is engaged in a novel and significant effort to interest the people of the state in its mineral resources and enlarge the field of nature-study in the Michigan schools by means of loan collections of geological specimens sent on application to high schools throughout the state. Each loan collection of specimens is accompanied by a book entitled *Notes on the Rocks and Minerals of Michigan* (Houghton, Mich., 1905), prepared for this express purpose by the Department of Geology of the Michigan College of Mines. This book contains a useful summary of the general characters of minerals and rocks together with an account of the mode of occurrence and distribution of the latter in Michigan, illustrated with a map and charts. It contains descriptions of the minerals of the loan collection, including iron and copper ores and associated minerals; and descriptions of rocks, also represented in the loan collection, including those of the Carboniferous, Devonian, Silurian, Cambrian, and Precambrian periods, the Huronian Rocks and the Basement Complex. The utilitarian as well as the scientific aspects of the minerals and rocks of the collection are frequently pointed out.

One of the conditions of obtaining the use of a loan collection is that "the collection shall be put to active use in the work of the school possessing it. (It may be used in the grades as well as in the high school proper.)" It could hardly fail to prove a valuable addition to the scientific equipment of any high school, especially if properly utilized by the teacher of physiography. There can be no doubt of the soundness of the pedagogy which underlies the method of introducing high-school pupils to the study of geology by awakening them to realities both scientific and economic that lie near at hand. In spite of all that has been said in favor of utilizing in education the more immediate surroundings, whether physical, industrial, or social, it is remarkable how little local adaptability schools exhibit. Educationally the example afforded by Michigan College of Mines in stimulating among the high schools of Michigan an intelligent interest in the mineral resources and geological features of the state has a significance not bounded by the specific subject concerned.

A considerable portion of "Proceedings of the Conference on Commercial Education," published by the University of Illinois as Part III of the *Installation of Edmund Janes James, Ph.D., LL.D., as President of the University of Illinois* is devoted to papers and discussions on the problem of providing commercial courses and training for business in the high school. Both representative educators and leading business men participated in the conference. The academic and the practical seemed for once to have arranged a truce for parley. Perhaps the most striking feature of the conference was the difference, which became clearly evident, between the two

A CONFERENCE
ON COMMERCIAL
EDUCATION

points of view so well represented. One side, the academic, emphasized the need for useful information and business technique (perhaps because it has been so commonly assumed by educators that useful information and business technique are what business pursuits chiefly demand); the other side, the side of the successful business man, emphasized the need for business technique but still more for moral character and such training as would conduce to its formation.

The address of Professor D. E. Burchell, of the University of Wisconsin, on "How Shall We Teach Business Practice?" and the address of Principal J. S. Sheppard, of the New York High School of Commerce, on "The Essentials of a Commercial Course for High Schools," are representative of the academic point of view. The point of view of the business man is represented in the address by Mr. David R. Forgan, President of the First National Bank of Chicago, on "What Business Men Want Young Men to Know," and the discussion of this address by Mr. E. L. Scott, General Manager of Sears, Roebuck and Company, Chicago.

Professor Burchell's address referred mainly to university conditions. Principal Sheppard's address, however, presented a specific and comprehensive treatment of the subject applying directly to high-school conditions. The address might appropriately have been entitled the "Commercialization of the High School Curriculum." Following a criticism of the "business college" for emphasizing technical facility at the expense of content, Principal Sheppard declared: "It is my conviction that, with the exception of the dead languages, there is scarcely a single standard secondary subject which cannot be very profitably included in a commercial curriculum. But it should be immediately added they must be given the sort of treatment that will yield the most valuable returns for commercial purposes.

"To illustrate: History has come to be a favored subject, the emphasis ordinarily being upon political lines. In a commercial course, the emphasis should be shifted to economic and commercial phases. Indeed, it is my belief that this is the best thing to do in even the classical school. In modern history, for instance, such topics as the following would be given due consideration: Security for labor from state authority; nation, the unit of economic organization; capital assumes large proportions, and enters colonial enterprises; recasting of commercial and industrial practice; mercantile system; rival commercial empires seeking colonies, treasures, shipping; colonial economic policy of Europe; the industrial revolutions; inventions; unstable industrial conditions; factory system; re-adaption and reconstruction of economic life; cosmopolitanism superseding nationalism; study of commercial conditions in Europe at the present time.

"All of this can be made highly interesting to the secondary student, and he can be led through a careful study of English and continental history along these lines—by no means to the entire exclusion of other lines—to a fairly adequate understanding of present-day industrialism and commercialism."

Other familiar high-school subjects, English, modern languages, science, mathematics, drawing, economics, follow suit. They are complemented in

turn to some extent by the educational value of the immediately commercial subjects of bookkeeping, stenography, etc. The latter subjects may be taught so as to have a culture value, just as the former subjects may be taught so as to have a commercial value.

"Briefly stated, it should be the aim of the commercial school to give the requisite technical equipment for business, but also to go far beyond that, and by a wise application of practically all the standard secondary subjects to commercial uses to give a depth and breadth of preparation that will insure an all-round efficiency, an easy adaptability to new and important tasks, and a degree of initiative."

Principal Sheppard's formula for creating a commercial high school seems to be a simple one: Eliminate the "dead languages." (From the fact that he refrains from mentioning them we concluded that he means Greek and Latin.) Reprocess the remaining high-school subjects to make them fit for commercial consumption. Add a suitable proportion of business technique.

Advocates of commercial education are likely to be scandalized by the way in which President Forgan minimizes the essential requirements in business technique. "Specifically, the things a young man ought to know as a result of his educational course are the things which will best help him in his work and lead to his rapid promotion. They are neither numerous nor difficult to learn; but judging from my experience in employing men, they are very rare qualifications in this country.

"What are they?

"First: To know how to write a good legible hand, to make good figures, and to place them correctly—the units below the units, the tens below the tens, and so on.

"Second: to know how to add, subtract, or multiply figures after they have been correctly taken down, and to do it rapidly, and with perfect accuracy; and

"Third: To know how to express yourself clearly, briefly, and grammatically in a letter, and how to spell the words correctly.

"A few years ago I was taking three young fellows of about eighteen years of age into business. They had all graduated from the high school. As a test I gave each of them forty old checks and instructed them to take down the amount of each check; and then add the column to ascertain the total. After they had labored with this gigantic task for half an hour I went over to see how they were doing, and found them all terribly busy and unwilling to submit the result of their labors to my inspection. I gave them more time. Returning later, I found them still anxiously checking and re-checking their work, and I took their examination papers from them. They had all done the job several times, but not one of the three had taken down the figures correctly, and not one of the three had correctly added the figures they had taken down. The task was beyond their powers. They explained to me that they had had no arithmetic for the past five years and were a little "rusty" on it. I remember that word "rusty." It struck me forcibly at the time. They informed me if I would

try them on mythology, they could pass, but I told them I had no use for myths in the banking business. . . .

"I have not given this subject careful thought or wise investigation, and I may be all wrong, but speaking as a business man of some experience, and as a father of a family, I charge the public schools of this country with attempting to teach so many subjects that the things which I consider essential and fundamental to a business education are not being so thoroughly drilled into the boys as their importance demands. The simple accomplishments which I have mentioned are the essential tools with which business men want boys to be provided when they begin a commercial career."

Another quotation will indicate, however, that President Forgan does not disparage the aim of providing a special type of education for those destined for commercial pursuits. "Only experience, hard, trying, and disappointing experience, can make a business man. But just as the university can put the student through a course of study which, with experience added, will produce an able lawyer or skilful physician, so I believe that it can supply the foundations upon which a successful business career may be built. Such a career will involve industry, faithfulness to duty, the welcoming instead of shirking of responsibility; it will require self-reliance, judgment of men, the capacity of seeing things as they are, and not as they are represented; it will call for courage, faith, and far-sightedness; above all, it will demand truth, square dealing, and integrity of character. All that will tend to implant such principles and foster such attributes of character may safely be included in a commercial education."

And again, and finally, the paramount ethical point: "In closing let me say that there is one thing business men want young men to know, which is more important than all else, namely, that integrity of character is, after all, the greatest power in the business world.

"In these days of graft and exaggerated reports of graft, it sometimes seems as if all business were crooked, and all men dishonest. Such a conclusion, however, would be hasty and unwarranted. The revelations of moral obliquity on the part of men in high positions do not prove that the great solid middle classes are dishonest. They only prove that, no matter how rich or influential a thief may be, his sin will surely find him out. The moral sense of the great majority still revolts at dishonesty, and the great mass of business is still transacted on a perfectly straight basis—the basis of simple honesty. Think for a moment of the place and potency of credit in the modern business world. The life-blood of modern commerce is not gold—it is credit. Over 90 per cent. of all business transactions involve credit. Without credit modern business would simply collapse. Credit starts enterprises, builds railroads, manufactures goods, moves merchandise, wages wars, sustains nations, makes civilization. Now if all this be true, if the whole system of modern business is built upon credit, then credit itself must rest upon a firm foundation, or the entire structure would crumble to ruin. That foundation is character. Credit, derived from *credo*, implies faith. Every transaction accomplished by credit is based upon confidence in

the integrity of someone. Thus character is the very foundation of modern business, and ultimate success on any other basis is almost an impossibility.

"A course in commercial education should, therefore, include moral teaching."

Last Summer, just before adjournment, Congress passed a comprehensive bill for the schools of the District of Columbia. This action was the result of several years' agitation in the city of Washington, and of several weeks in the taking of testimony and consideration of arguments by committees of the House and Senate. The result may be said to represent the best that the highest legislative body in the land can deliberately produce. Washington has been a sort of national laboratory for experiments in school management, and this, the latest development, naturally demands some attention. For this and the following information we are indebted to Mr. Colyer Meriwether, secretary of the Southern History Association, Washington, D. C.

*THE NEW
EDUCATIONAL BILL
FOR THE DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA*

"There are four important features in it of general interest to public education throughout this country, and one of these of special importance to students of politics and government.

"First, the salaried board that we have had for six years was abolished, and hereafter the nine members constituting the board will serve without compensation, thus returning to conditions that obtained up to half a dozen years ago.

"Second, salaries were increased, and at the same time equalized as much as possible. Here at the very fountain of democracy we can hardly expect either extreme to obtain. For teachers the highest is \$2,200 and the lowest \$500, these being the two limits for the high school and the kindergartens. They are a very substantial increase from former rates.

"Third, the superintendent is emphatically put in the saddle, being in full control of the whole educational force, subject to indorsement by the board, to whom he must make recommendations in writing. He is to serve for three years at a salary of \$5,000, being liable to removal in the meantime for cause. This feature is very significant here, as we have tried both extremes. Up to six years ago, owing to uncertainty in the law, we had substantially one-man power with no very great check. Since then we had a committee of seven, the board of education, trying to discharge executive duties. We now have a blending of both of these systems.

"Fourth, the colored schools are put in the hands of a colored assistant superintendent, under the direction of the white superintendent, but no other supervision by whites. We thus have two distinct systems of schools yoked in the person of the highest white official. Again, this is the choice of the middle way, as for years the negroes managed educational matters for themselves under the composite board of education. Then the white superintendent and several of his assistants had power of management. Elements of both are now welded into one plan.

"The law requires three of the trustees to be women, but has no utterance on the racial proportion, though according to custom here three of the present board are colored. The act makes no distinction whatever between the sexes."